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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: EU Pollinator Week
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency on the above mentioned subject to be raised under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 15 November 2021.

EU Pollinator Week

Presidency Note

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

(Agriculture and Fisheries)

15 November 2021

Pollination by wild species is one of the essential services provided by nature. However, wild pollinators have declined in diversity and occurrence in the recent decades¹. Promoting and recognizing the fundamental role and contribution of bees and other pollinators with respect to sustainable food production and nutrition has been an important priority for Slovenia for many years. In order to raise awareness of the importance of bees and other pollinators and their role for agriculture, the environment and humankind in general, Slovenia proposed that the United Nations (UN) proclaim 20 May as World Bee Day. In line with this long-standing efforts, Slovenia included pollinators among its Presidency priorities.

At the informal meeting of the environment ministers on 20 and 21 July, the ministers had the opportunity to exchange views on the Commission Report on progress² in the implementation of actions to reverse the decline of pollinators, which was prepared under the EU Pollinators Initiative³. The Commission plans to revise the Initiative in 2022, and is currently consulting stakeholders on policy options for a new reinforced action framework, including in the agricultural sector. This year's Pollinator week⁴ took place from 28 September until 1 October 2021. The aim of the event was to step up EU actions that will stop the decline of pollinators by 2030. The EU Pollinator Week was co-organised by Members of the European Parliament and BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination, in partnership with the European Commission, European Food Safety Agency and the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

¹ IPBES 2016

https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/2017_pollination_full_report_book_v12_pages.pdf

² Doc. 9486/21

³ COM/2018/395 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0395>

⁴ <https://www.pollinatorweek.eu/>

Within this event, on 28 September, the Commission organised a formal **consultation workshop**, entitled “*EU actions for pollinators in agricultural landscapes*”. The aim of the workshop was to gather expert views, suggestions, and concrete policy proposals to strengthen actions for pollinators in agriculture. Key stakeholders, including experts from the farming sector, the nature conservation sector, academia, civil society organisations and public authorities participated. The Presidency considers the workshop conclusions extremely relevant for agriculture and the preparation of the CAP national strategic plans.

The workshop conclusions in particular recommended that the EU and Member States incentivise scaling up interventions for pollinators to the landscape level, with a view to maintain or restore **biodiverse landscapes** with a high level of **habitat connectivity**. This would entail a strategic placement of pollinator habitats beyond farm level, and thus would require a good **cooperation** among farmers. The experts highlighted **collective schemes** and rewards, supported by public authorities and fostered by farmers’ associations and other stakeholder groups, as the key tool to achieve such cooperation. They considered those tools to be especially effective if implemented through a result-based approach, and a tiered payment system that could combine a basic payment at farm level and a bonus for landscape-scale impacts.

The workshop participants emphasized that both productive parcels and non-productive elements of the agricultural landscape should be managed in a way to ensure a pollinator-friendly environment, where forage and nesting resources are available throughout the vegetation season and where risks of pesticide use to pollinating insects are mitigated. The workshop conclusions specifically recommended that the EU ensures strong incentives under the CAP to enhance the management of **landscape features of high ecological value**, and that Member States create suitable frameworks to translate these incentives into measures under both Pillars.

The essential focus of the workshop was not on ‘what’ needs to be done in agriculture for pollinator conservation, but rather on ‘how’ to achieve it. Necessary measures, whether pollinator-specific or in the form of general biodiversity measures, are already well known. The experts stressed that without essential tools - in particular a robust monitoring system, indicators and farm advisory systems – and without good collaboration between agricultural and environmental authorities at all governance levels, it will not be possible to (cost-)effectively develop and implement any envisaged action.

The workshop conclusions recommended that Member States implement the **EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme**⁵, in order to ensure the availability of data on the status and trends of pollinator species - a crucial prerequisite for evaluating the impacts of undertaken actions. The implementation will require concrete allocation of funds and resources. The participants also stressed the importance of monitoring of how the actions are implemented, as well as changes they instigate in agricultural management and/or land-use/cover. In this regard, the need to make available and utilise relevant data under the **Integrated Administration and Control System** (IACS) was particularly highlighted. The experts emphasised that good data on pollinator species, agricultural management and changes in the agricultural landscapes is an indispensable for development of robust **indicators** to track progress and success of undertaken actions, as well as to provide timely feedback to farmers and other actors. They also called on the Commission to ensure support of the best available science for the indicators.

Furthermore, it was recommended that Member States ensure resources for setting up biodiversity-focused training and advice to farmers within their **Farm Advisory Systems**. The workshop participants stressed that the advisory systems should be strengthened and trained in pollinator conservation and habitat monitoring combining agricultural and ecological knowledge and expertise. This would, together with stronger engagement of the farming sector in the development of measures, ensure a good uptake and effective implementation of pollinator measures.

Finally, the workshop conclusions called on EU institutions and Member States to address **silos** and enhance **communication** channels, particularly between the agricultural and environmental authorities. It was recommended to set up regular cross-sectoral dialogues at the EU and national levels, which would take stock on actions for pollinators and address challenges. The participants stressed the importance of involving key stakeholder networks and the general public in those dialogues.

The formal report from the workshop is currently being finalised by the Commission and will be subsequently published. The workshop recommendations will feed into the discussions on the strengthening of policy actions for pollinators in the agricultural sector, in the context of the revision of the EU Pollinators Initiative.

⁵ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC122225>